

MECHANICAL MEMORIES MAGAZINE

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The only UK magazine dedicated to vintage coin-operated amusement machines

Mechanical Memories Magazine

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Editorial

Hello, and here we are with the November magazine. As usual at this time of year, there haven't been enough hours in the day or enough days in the week, so I'll keep this brief. If all goes to plan, I should be getting the magazines and auction catalogues back from the printers at about the same time, so if you've already ordered a catalogue, then it will be included with your magazine. If you haven't ordered one – do it now!

Look forward to seeing you all at the auction

All the best

Jerry

Front Cover Picture:

Strength tester at the Weston-Super-Mare museum – see Stuart's article on page 8.

Dreamland

MARGATE

Save Dreamland Update October 2012

DESIGNS ON DREAMLAND

We are delighted to announce the recent appointment of multi-disciplinary designer Wayne Hemingway MBE and the award-winning HemingwayDesign team (www.hemingwaydesign.co.uk) to bring forward the overall design and branding for the forthcoming revival of Dreamland.

From their origins selling second hand clothes on Camden and Kensington Markets in the early 1980s, Wayne and Gerardine Hemingway built the legendary Red or Dead into a fashion design label to receive global acclaim winning the British Fashion Council's Streetstyle Designer of the Year Award for three consecutive years. In 1999 the Hemingways launched HemingwayDesign moving into urban design and regeneration which led to one of the UK's quirkiest seaside regenerations projects, The Boscombe Overstrand in Bournemouth, winning Best Regeneration Scheme at the LGC Awards in 2010.

HemingwayDesign's impressive track record spanning urban design, regeneration, fashion, seaside heritage, vintage culture and festival is a perfect match to The Dreamland Trust's vision for the world's first amusement park of thrilling historic rides and a good fit for Margate's creative and vintage vibe. We are really excited about Hemingway's appointment. Wayne and Gerardine have created some truly great places, from the transformation of Boscombe seafront to the regeneration of a rundown housing estate in Norfolk. Wayne, Gerardine and the team have a genuine passion for the British seaside and for the Dreamland Margate project.

PROJECT UP-DATE

The current Dreamland site owner, Margate Town Centre Regeneration Company Ltd, has lodged its anticipated appeal against Thanet District Council's Compulsory Purchase Order, which was approved by the Secretary of State last August. We are currently awaiting a date for the hearing. In the meantime the council continues to have access to the site to carry out safeguarding works under Urgent Works Notices to prevent further deterioration to the site's listed, heritage assets after years of neglect - the next of which is urgent work to the historic Compton cinema organ.

Meanwhile the Heritage Lottery Fund has granted us permission to start work – over the coming months this will include: branding and design, finalising further rides acquisition, off-site rides restoration; events and attractions prospectus; pre-opening programming; continued archive building; developing a visual document; on-going funding strategy; continued learning and engagement activities; events; and formation of a Dreamland Cinema Trust.

RIDES NEWS!

Over the summer months we have been in discussion with Michael Smith at the Dingles Fairground Heritage Centre in Devon, who has agreed to come on board as our Historic Rides Consultant. Michael brings a wealth of knowledge in the preservation of historic rides through his association with The Fairground Heritage Trust and industry links with Carter's Steam Fair and historic ride restorer, David Littleboy. Dreamland's permanent historic rides collection will be supported by guest rides and sideshows whilst playing host to visiting attractions, exhibition, events and festivals throughout the year.

NEXT EVENT

Our next event is a visual talk on the Dreamland Margate Project past, present and future at the Society for the Protection for Ancient Buildings at 6.30pm on Thursday 6th December 2012 at St Botolph's Hall, Bishopsgate, London EC2M 3TL. For full details and bookings please visit the SPAB website events page at www.spab.org.uk.

Nick Laister

Nick Laister (Chairman, The Dreamland Trust)

Jan Leandro (Audience Development Officer)

www.dreamlandmargate.com

www.savedreamland.co.uk

Amusement Park Rides

by Martin Easdown

The rollercoaster is usually the main attraction of any amusement or theme park, and this book outlines the history of these fascinating structures. From the first mass-produced rollercoaster, the Switchback Railway, through to the giant wooden coasters of the inter-war period, the author uses historic postcards and photographs to chart their development and that of other amusement rides including revolving towers, aerial rides, Ferris wheels and water chutes, all of which were produced from the late Victorian era in myriad forms. Essential to the very existence of such amusement venues as Blackpool Pleasure Beach, Southend's Kursaal and Margate's Dreamland, these much-loved rides are not so far removed from their modern-day equivalents as they might at first appear.

Contents:

- I: Early Rollercoasters and Switchback Railways
- II: Gathering Momentum—Figure Eight and Scenic Railways
- III: Aerial Rides
- IV: Water Chutes, Slides and Other Rides
- V: The Great Coasters of the Inter-war Period and their Legacy
- Further Reading
- Index

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MARTIN EASDOWN

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Weston Super-Mare (*re-visisted*)

By Stuart Dale

Over the years I must have been to Western Super Mare on Holiday about five or six times. I remember the last time I was there was in mid July 2008. We stopped at a hotel that was just up the road from the Grand Pier, not knowing that a few days after we went home the Grand Pier would be burnt to the ground. The Grand pier had only just changed hands in February 2008 when brother and sister Kerry & Michelle Michael took ownership, and they had already invested £1 million pounds in its restoration. At this point many people would have walked away and left the pier to rot, but not the Michael's, they just picked themselves up and got on with the mammoth job of rebuilding the pier. After two years of hard work the Grand pier reopened on October 2010, and on that first weekend they had an estimated 100.00 visitors, which for any seaside pier is amazing.



The new pavilion on the Grand pier.

When I visited the pier in June 2012, I was very impressed with the quality of the workmanship, albeit a little modern for my tastes. There was one attraction that I was glad to see, which had that vintage feel to it; a shooting range called 'Dead Man's Cove.' I remember playing a similar machine back in the 1960's, when you hit one of the animated targets you get sprayed with a fine jet of water. Oh, for the good old days when life seemed simpler.

It is a great shame that Western Super Mare's second and oldest pier *Birnbeck* can't be given the same sort of attention. Unfortunately, the location of Birnbeck pier is against it ever happening; it's a case of out of sight out of mind, as Birnbeck pier is just round the headland to the north east of the Grand pier and can't be seen from the main promenade. It is a pier that is just dripping with character and crying out for restoration. In 1979 Birnbeck was also the very first home of the National Museum of Penny Slot Machines, set up and run by Clive Baker & John Hayward. Unfortunately, it was to be a short lived endeavour, as the following year they moved the museum lock stock and barrel to Brighton. The museum remained in Brighton, operating under various names, and is still run today as *Mechanical Memories* by our very own Jerry.



The Dead Man's Cove shooting gallery on the Grand pier.

The main part of Bernbeck pier is built on a small rocky island that is connected to the mainland via a cast iron pier some 20 feet wide and 1,150 feet long. In its heyday it was very popular with the holidaymakers, the pier first opened for business in June 1867 and records show that in the first three months 120.000 visitors paid 2d each to walk on the pier. An extension jetty was added to the side of the island, and steamer ships were then able to bring in visitors and day-trippers by sea. The pier had many attractions and amusements including a Switchback & a water chute, all of which are long gone. It was also home to the life boat station, and despite many collisions by passing ships and damage by storms, Bernbeck remained open to the public until 1994.

The pier is now in private ownership and has changed hands twice since its closure. No real work has been done on the pier other than fencing it off for safety reasons. I have been told that the last plans were to remove everything from the pier and island, and replace it with luxury apartments and a hotel, but I think that the recession has put the brakes on that idea for now.



Birnbeck pier today, in a very sad state.

But fear not! There are still some vintage slots to be played in Western Super-mare, if you know where to look. The Western Super-mare museum is housed in a large airy building that was for many years the home of the street gas lighting workshops, and it can be found on Burlington Street.

Alongside the usual local history displays you will find a small collection of fully working vintage machines, including some working models. There is an Ahrens Scientific Automatic Palmistry machine that will read your palm and give you a card with fortune printed on it, and a two-player football game also by Ahrens. For those of you who like a little horror, you can take a look inside the Haunted House or witness an American Execution by Electric Chair. If you happen to be in a happy mood you could always try my wife's favourite machine, the Laughing Sailor. For just a penny he will have you in stitches.



The entrance to the small penny arcade display.

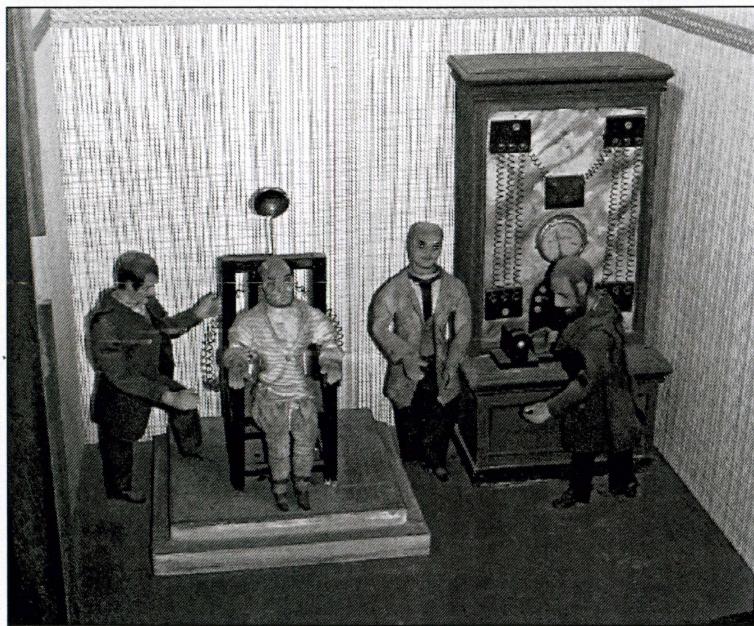
If you are feeling strong, there is always the strength tester ready to take your penny and show you up as the weakling you really are. Or if you are looking for some 'saucy' entertainment you could always give the Mutoscope a try.

Once you have spent your last penny on the machines you can relax in Clara's cafe in the courtyard next to the gift shop. So next time you are in Western Super-mare why not pop in and say hello.

Stuart Dale



Ahrens Scientific Palmistry.



Top, Ahrens two-player Football.
Above, detail of the American Execution.

Coventry 2012

So, Nov. 25th is almost upon us, and once again we're all looking forward to the biggest slotties' event in the year. For the benefit of those who will be attending for the first time (and as a reminder to the rest), here are a few points:

Entrance is strictly by catalogue, which admits one person. However, if you're bringing a friend, there's no need to order an additional catalogue, as tickets for 'guests' will be available on the door @ £3 each.

Viewing is from 10.30 am. Please do not arrive earlier (unless you're a vendor), as you will not be admitted – the organisers and vendors must be allowed adequate time for setting up. The auction will commence at about mid day.

This is a cash only auction – no cards, cheques, promises, etc. Please also note that we will not be paying in or out until the end of the auction, so if you wish to go early, please do not bid – there will be no exceptions.

I think we've got the message across by now, but for the benefit of newbies, there is to be no buying, selling or dealing outside of the auction. We certainly do not want to see unsold auction lots flogged off in the carpark afterwards. If anyone attempts to sell you something outside of the auction, please let us know.

We have in the past allowed children, but only by prior arrangement. I don't think we've had any children in attendance over the last two or three years, and to be honest, this probably isn't the right place for potentially bored kids anyway. However, if you do need to bring children, please call me on 07710 285360. Please use your judgement, as we will not allow disruptive brats to spoil the enjoyment of others. We will certainly not be admitting very small children, babies or toddlers.

**So, we look forward to seeing you all on the 25th.
This is YOUR day – don't miss it!**

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Coventry 2012 Preview

Once again, I think there is another great day in store for us all. At the time of writing, there are still more lots to come in, but I think we'll be looking at about 280. Many thanks to our regular vendors, who as usual have come up with a great selection of machines and associated items. It's also good to welcome a few new vendors entering lots for the first time. As usual, we have a great selection of machines, with something to suit everyone. And for those who like a challenge, there are a good number of projects to keep you occupied over the winter months. There are plenty of interesting non machine lots too, including coins, spares, books and paperwork etc.

Every one of our auctions has been different, with different strengths. Do you remember three years ago when we broke all records with over forty bandits? Yet, other years, the bandit count has been pretty low. This time I think the number should be just about right, with about two dozen. Machines range from Aristocrat, Jubilee, Sega etc.; some nice Mills and Sega Hi-Tops; a choice of Jennings Governors and some nice projects, including a Watling Roll-a-Top and a Mills War Eagle.

The selection of allwins this year is certainly different to our past events. To start, there is just one Olly Whales (so far).....can you believe it? There are also no Wonders. On the other hand, there will be a couple of rare BMCos on offer, which have always been thin on the ground at our auctions. Other allwins include a rare Parkers 'Eleven Wins', R&W Hat Trick, early Win a Cig., Saxony machines and a number of Bryans.



Mills Wareagle



Jennings Governor



Buckley Criss Cross

Other wall machines include an early and extremely rare 'Pavilion' Tivoli type machine, Bell Fruit Cascade, Pete Barson Smithy, Bradley Challenger, a rare Stevenson & Lovett Sky Jump, plus a number of German wall bandits. Sadly, Harold is no longer with us, so there will not be the usual varied selection of German electro-mechs. Bryans machines include an early Pilwin, Ten Cup and Elevenses allwins; a really nice Worlborl in streamline case, Bullion, Clocks and two hard to find All Sports (yes two – what were the chances of that)?!

Not much in the way of floor-standing machines this year, with one exception: a fantastic 1950s Monkey Race game. I'd really like this for myself, but at nearly 7ft high, there's no way it would fit in the van. Another machine of interest is a nicely restored 'Tuck Shop' pinball, by Shields of Bridlington – I don't think I have ever seen one of these come up at auction, they're certainly pretty rare.

As usual, there will be a good selection of 'other stuff', including a number of classic slottie books that are now very hard to come by, being long out of print. There's a huge number of bandit spares, and although they won't be of interest to everyone, the 'bandit men' will certainly be having a field day this year! Of huge interest will be some material relating to the Oliver Whales family, including covering letters from Oliver Whales Jnr (Oliver's nephew).

So, lots to look forward to. As last year, I shall be posting all the pictures supplied by vendors on my website. I've already posted some – by the time you read this, I hope to have posted them all. I'm also hoping that by the time you read this, I shall have fixed the domain, so make sure you have it permanently pasted into your browsers:

www.mechanicalmemoriesmagazine.co.uk



Bryans All Sport

Out of the Closet

By Martin Larcombe

At last! After many years of denial, side-stepping questions such as “what arrives every month in that little brown envelope?” I can finally come out in the open and admit, “I am a slottie!” It seems appropriate just before another MMM auction that I put to paper my thoughts and experience from last years gathering.

I am afraid I do not seem to have a defining moment from my past where (as some of you seem to) I became fascinated by mechanical slot machines; I wish I did. All I can say is for our holidays as children we always went to the seaside: Margate, Weston-Super-Mare, Bournemouth etc.. and once a year a travelling Fair used to pitch up on a playing field in our village, directly opposite where we lived.

On entering the penny arcades I would always head straight to the allwins. There is something about the connection of putting money into a slot and pulling a trigger, knowing that the pressure you place on the release of that handle determines if you win or loose. You have control, therefore you can determine the outcome; the cups are fixed, the circular track is motionless, the only variable is in your level of skill. It is a challenge. Placing money into a machine with three reels where you pull and wait... just did not do it for me.

So having drifted into my late forties, I did not expect that fascination to be rejuvenated. But a visit to a pub in Giggleswick, which had a couple of allwins on the wall, did just that. Of course, I could not resist playing them and on return home searched the internet to find that not only could you buy these machines but there was also a dedicated website, and a magazine. So I signed up, subscribed to the magazine and my brown envelopes started to arrive.

I laid dormant for a couple of years enjoying the articles but not daring to go to an auction and bid for fear I might buy a ‘minger’, until finally taking the plunge last year and booking a hotel well in advance, so the date was fixed.

It is a strange experience going to/meeting a collectable group; you have no idea what type of people you are about to mix with. Will they all be experts? Will anyone talk to me, having little knowledge? Will they brush me aside for not knowing the difference between a Whales and a Bryans?

Well we arrived at a social club where fortunately the fast moving world had passed it by, sat in the car park for a bit and watched a few people entering. They did not have two heads or strange clothing; they all seemed quite normal. So we entered and found ourselves standing in front of a small table with a couple that seemed to be on the ball. I thrust out my programme and just at that moment a guy came up and said “Jerry, where do you want to put the bandits?” Finally, without realising, I was in front of the MMM author who had been sharing his editorials with me for the last few

years. "Hello Jerry, I am Martin Larcombe" – he knew me, we had never met or spoken....a quick explanation of what, where, when and we were in. Then fear/excitement as I looked up to see a mass of organised but tightly crammed machines in small isles and people, looking at, in and around. Where do we start with such limited knowledge? Well we stumbled about for a while and then strangely you start to get a feel, having so many machine types, ages and conditions all in one place you can get an understanding and you narrow down your choices. Having marked our preferences on the auction list, we bought a coffee, waited, listened and watched (this was our first ever auction of any kind)!

Well off it went, on time, with a couple of slick auctioneers, 300 lots and a busy room; they were not going to be hanging around. More fear....our first lot was getting closer at No.17 it was early, we had no chance to assess. How high do we go? When do we start with our first bid? Do we hold our number up? Should we stand up or maybe shout out? Well, no fears, the auctioneers sharp eyes see all and we were off and running, £300, £400, £450.STOP, calm down, over my estimate (whatever that meant)! But it did not appear to be sold – first lesson, reserves.

On we went, we had targeted about five machines with one I particularly liked as it had an unusual back flash and held balls in reserve. It is quite surprising and I hope others are reading who may be unsure of coming to the auction, how quickly you start to get a feel for the value and therefore have a little more confidence in assessing and making bids. After several more lots my targeted machine was the next up. About five people were up for it, which came down to two and finally after beating a closed bid I was the proud owner of my first allwin. If I smoked, I think I would have lit my Hamlet there and then and puffed away.

Ok, now I have my machine I am ready to pay and leave now....Oh no, you wait until all lots are bid for then you form a queue (I think a little naive on my part). Well the bar was open so no problem in waiting! It was also interesting to watch machines being bid for, whilst making estimates in your mind as to how much they might go for. So I queued, paid (cash only plus sales commission) and was given a slip of paper which meant I could finally put my arms around my treasured possession, give my release slip to Jeremy, leave the hall, carefully walking to my car.

A long interesting and worthwhile day, with friendly people, well organised and one proud owner of an Oliver Whales allwin, with a smile that lasted all the way back down the M1. Thanks Jerry, Jeremy and I am sure a few others, who will all be busy preparing for this years auction later this month. If you are thinking shall I go or shall I not go, well just do it, as it is a fascinating day and you never know, you might just be loading your car at the end of the afternoon.

Martin Larcombe

Two of a Kind

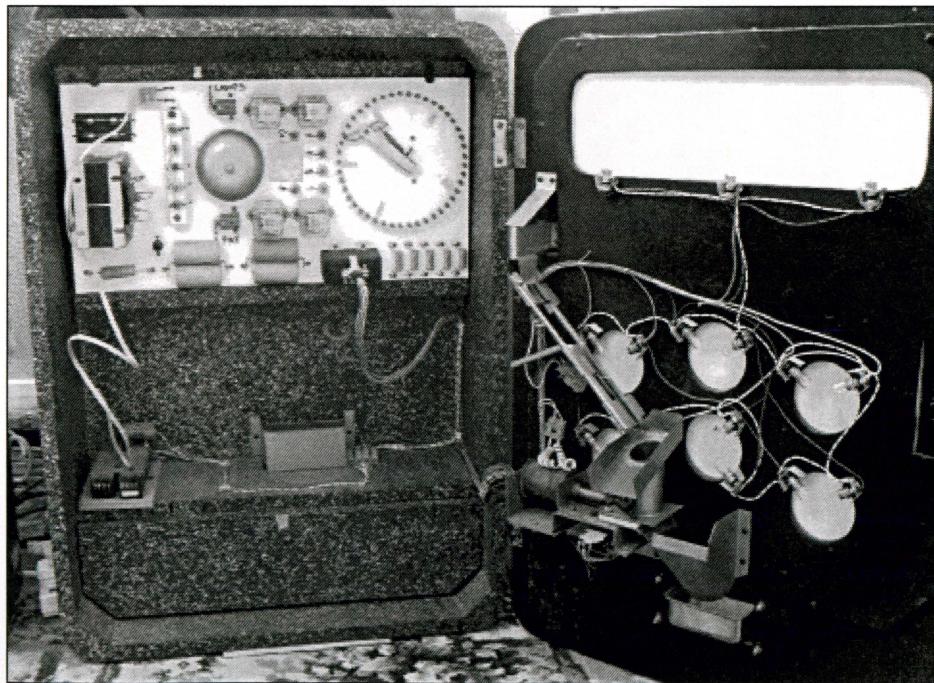
By Robert Rowland

A few months ago, I acquired an electro-mechanical machine from the 1960s, which I know won't be to everyone's taste. A close look at my machine indicates that it was probably very cheaply made, compared to other electro-mechs. that were around at the same time. There is no glass and the artwork is printed onto plastic. The inside you could call a concoction of relays, solenoids and bulbs. However, I do like it, and that is all that matters.



The machine is called **Two of a Kind**, and that is exactly what you need to achieve a win. I do remember seeing this type of machine back in the 1960s, all housed in the same cabinets but with different themes. On insertion of an old penny, the six symbols will randomly flash on and off, you then have to press the stop button to end the play. This machine will not stop by itself, unlike my Greyhound Stadium, which I wrote about in the April issue of this magazine. If you don't press the stop button, the machine will simply run all day, or until the motor burns out!

I found winning combinations very hard to come by on this machine, and upon opening the door and looking inside, I soon realised why. The main control board has a 46-position rotary switch with a moving finger type contact, which moves around in a clockwise direction. A full circle lasts four seconds, only five of the 46 positions are winners, the rest are losers. There are three positions for Cherry, paying 3d; one position for Plum, paying 6d and also only one position for Bell, paying the top prize of 9d. There is no sequence to payouts on this machine, unlike many other electro-mechanicals of the same era, so in theory you could stop on a winner every time (but we all know that in reality, this won't happen).



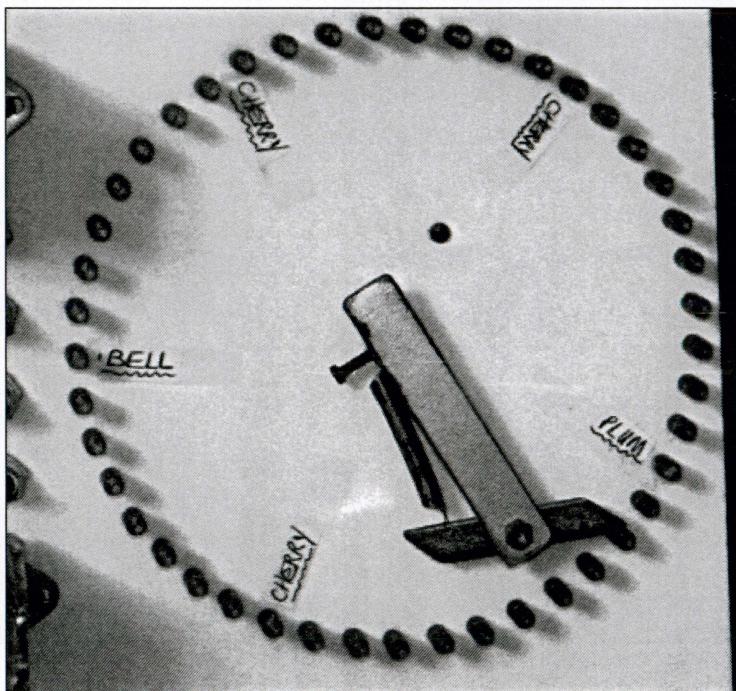
Inside Robert's machine, showing the control board. Note the bell in the centre, which seems to have been obligatory on some of these 1960s electro-mechs.

Another thing I noticed was that only one bulb remains lit out of the two bulbs housed behind each symbol. This is because on machines of this type, the two bulbs behind each fruit are not wired together, so only one bulb will ever be lit at one time. That is just the way the machine is wired, so you can get all the different combinations. If you run the machine with the door open and watch how the bulbs light as the machine is running, you will see that every bulb will light (flash on and off) at least once as the finger moves one full turn round the rotary switch. To be honest, it's pretty hard to tell from the outside anyway.

I really do like this machine and it's fun to play, pitting your luck against such long odds. The other week, a friend of mine came to look at this machine and with the very first penny he played he got the two bells, paying 9d. Beginner's luck, eh?

If you would like to fully check out my machine, get yourself onto Youtube and search *penny arcade machine two of a kind* and enjoy it in all its glory.

Robert Rowland



Close-up of the rotary switch, showing the five winning positions.

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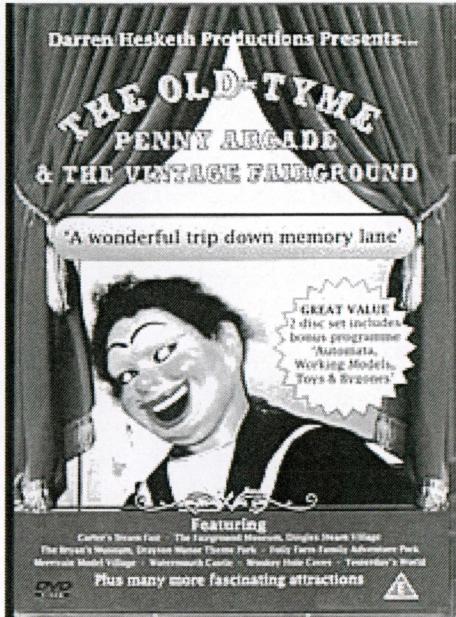
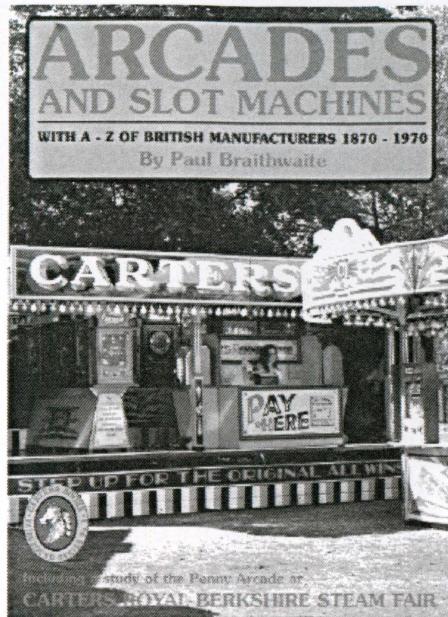
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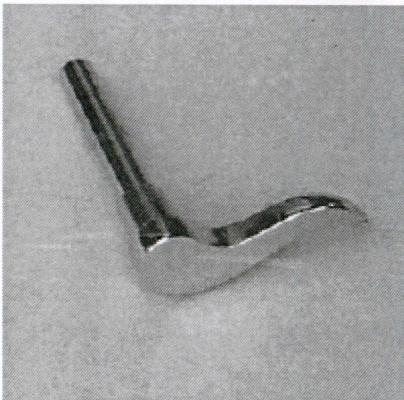
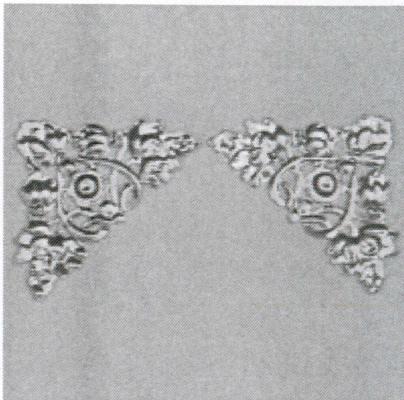
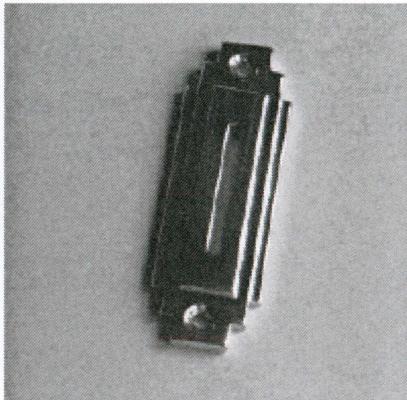
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